

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L 7336

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IR, SHUM
SUBJ: PRESS COVERAGE BECOMES MORE OPEN

1. OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS WE HAVE NOTED SIGNIFICANTLY FULLER AND MORE OPEN PRESS COVERAGE OF INTERNAL IRANIAN ISSUES AND EVENTS. BEGINNING WITH LOCAL MEDIA REPORTS ON VARIOUS RIOTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS, PROGRESSING THROUGH NEW TRIAL PROCEDURES AND ACCOUNTS OF ON-GOING INDIVIDUAL COURT CASES AND MOST RECENTLY TO RECAPS AND ON-THE-SCENE PHOTO COVERAGE OF RIOTING, THE PRESS HAS BECOME NOTICABLY MORE LIVELY AND LESS CONSTRAINED IN REPORTING DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES. ONE PROVINCIAL PAPER HAS EVEN RUN ARTICLES SOLICITING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM READERS ON THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN MASHAD.

2. PRIOR TO THE MAJLIS SUMMER RECESS IN JULY IRANIAN NEWSPAPERS PRINTED DAILY ARTICLES ON VARIOUS SELF-PROFESSED INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PERSONALITIES AND THEIR CRITICISMS OF PRESENT GOI PROGRAMS AND POLICIES. IN ITS JULY 16 ISSUE FYI POLITICAL SUMMARY DEVOTED TEN PAGES TO A PIECE ENTITLED, "THIRD WING CONTROVERSY," A DETAILED EXAMINATION OF A CRITICAL REPORT RECENTLY ISSUED BY THE IRANIAN PROBLEMS STUDY GROUP. TWO WEEKS LATER SAME PUBLICATION RAN VERY CRITICAL ESSAY ON RESURGENCY PARTY.

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3. ALTHOUGH MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BECOME MANIFESTLY MORE OBJECTIVE AND INFORMATIVE COMPLETE PRESS FREEDOM IN THE WESTERN SENSE HAS NOT YET ARRIVED. DEMONSTRATIONS, WHILE RECEIVING UNPRECEDENTED PRESS ATTENTION, STILL DO NOT APPEAR AS IMMEDIATE SPOT REPORTS. THIS IS ATTRIBUTABLE IN PART TO LOCAL PRESS DEPENDENCE

ON MINISTRY OF INFORMATION BRIEFINGS AND "SUGGESTIONS,"
AND PART TO INGRAINED CAUTION OF EDITORS WHO ARE FIRST
TO FEEL OFFICIAL HEAT IF ANYTHING GOES WRONG. SOME
EDITORS THEMSELVES NOW FEEL THEY HAVE A MANDATE TO GO
FURTHER THAN BEFORE.
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